

Silent Reading for Struggling Readers: Pitfalls & Potential

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**REVISITING SILENT READING:
NEW DIRECTIONS FOR
TEACHERS AND RESEARCHERS**

Plenary Session 4
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Plenary Session 4–Agenda

1. Overview of pitfalls and potential
2. Review of research
3. Rationale for steps to scaffold SSR with struggling readers
4. Steps to support SSR with struggling readers
5. Future research
6. Conclusions
7. References
8. Contact information

1. Pitfalls...

For struggling readers

- Difficulty with reading complex words, understanding critical vocabulary, reading comprehension, and maintaining focus for extended periods
- Inadequate opportunity to build their SSR (often excluded)
- Insufficient instructional time devoted to text reading
- Inappropriate self-selection of text
- Distant role of teachers

For middle and high-ability readers

- Inadequate access to materials of high interest
- Insufficient methods for students to demonstrate engagement and understanding of texts
- Lack of preteaching or follow-up instruction
- Inappropriate self-selection of text

and Potential

Builds:

- Vocabulary
- Motivation
- Background knowledge
- Reading comprehension

Given that teachers provide support at critical points of the silent reading process so struggling readers can experience success during SSR (Hairrell, Edmonds, Vaughn, & Simmons, in press)

2. Research on SSR and Struggling Readers

Table 1. Research on SSR with students with reading difficulties.

Studies	Setting(s)	Variables Measured	Findings
Clark, 1975; Clark & Spath, 1976; Haynes & Jenkins, 1986; Leinhardt, Zigmond, & Cooley, 1981; Stallings, 1980	Elementary classroom, remedial reading class, resource room	Time spent reading silently v. reading comprehension	Mixed
Davis, 1988	8 th grade	Teacher directed instruction v. SSR	SSR more appropriate for high- and medium ability readers than low-ability readers
Melton, 1993	3 rd /4 th graders with LD	Modified SSR v. typical instruction	Word reading = no difference Words in context and reading comprehension = significant difference
Methe, 2003	3 rd grade	Modified SSR with teacher modeling v. teacher working at desk	Higher on-task behavior with teacher modeling
Wu & Samuels, 2004	3 rd /5 th	15 m. v. 40 m x grade level (3 rd v. 5 th) x reading ability (above v. below)	Less time on SSR needed to improve reading speed and comprehension A longer period of time is needed to build vocabulary
Block, Parris, Reed, Whiteley, & Cleveland, 2009	4 elementary schools 1 middle school	Workbook practice v. individualized schema-based learning v. situated practice v. conceptual learning v. transitional learning v. basal readers	Most successful approaches included student selection of books for guided independent practice, reading more than 7 pages of text, and 15-20 minutes of teacher-monitored SSR

3. Rationale for Scaffolding SSR

For the struggling reader, SSR can pose many obstacles:

1. Text selection
2. Reading comprehension
3. Accountability and monitoring
4. Motivation

Important finding from syntheses on text reading and students with LD:

Students with significant reading problems require opportunities for time to **read** and **respond** to text

For struggling readers SSR Requires:

- Adequate preparation,
- Instructional support during reading, and
- Extended time for expression (oral and written) with teacher feedback about their reading

Without the above in place, challenges presented by extended periods of unmonitored silent reading can be overwhelming and unproductive

4. Instructional Practices to Support Struggling Readers During SSR

STEPS TO SUPPORT SILENT READING FOR STRUGGLING READERS

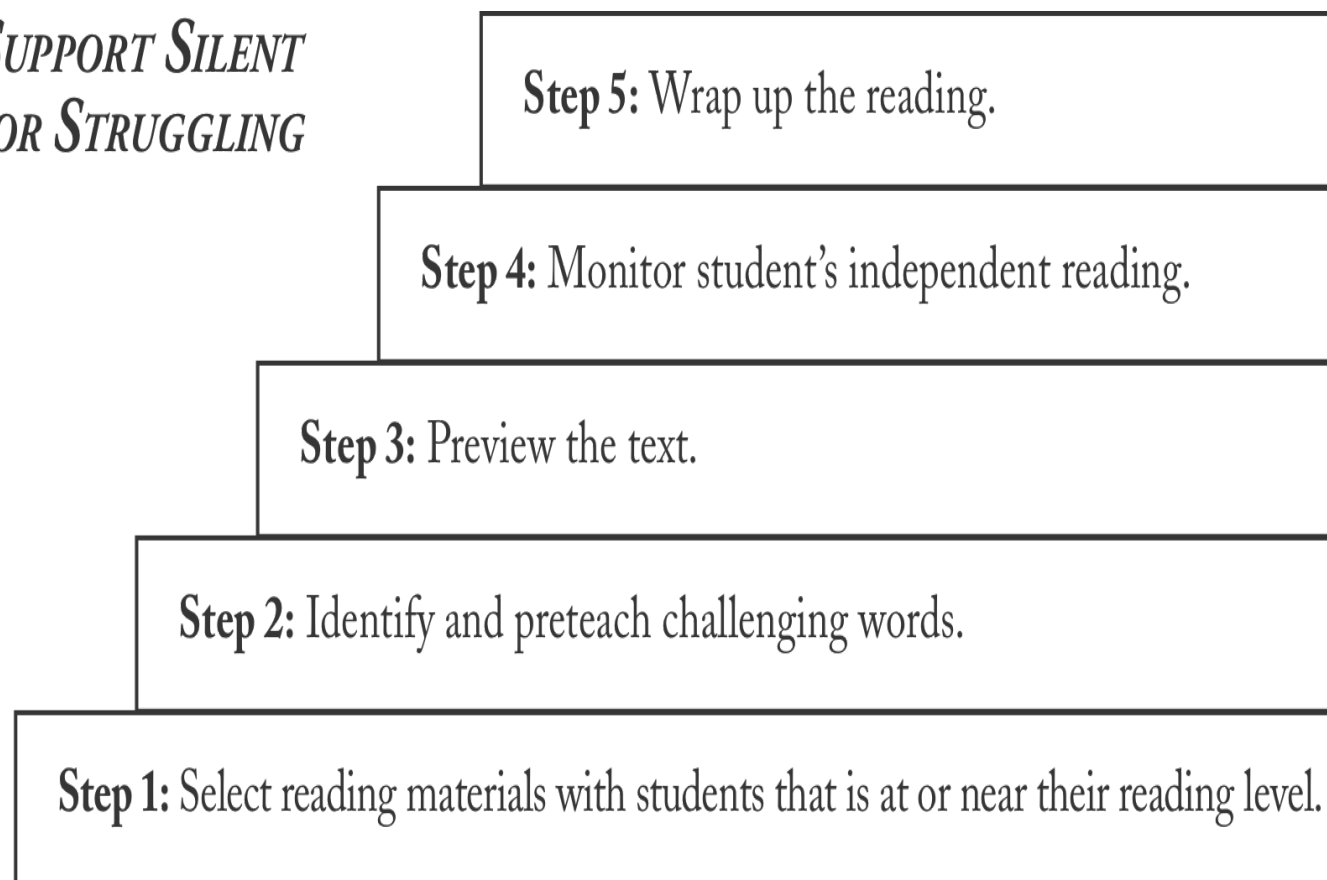


Figure 1. Steps to support silent reading for struggling readers.

Step 1: Support book selection that matches students' interest and reading levels.

- Book lists or searches:

<http://www.reading.org/Resources/Booklists.aspx>

<http://www.rif.org/parents/resources/books/default.aspx>

- Teach students strategies to identify appropriate text difficulty independently

Step 2: Identify challenging words and promote word consciousness.

Student:

- Scan a page prior to reading to identify challenging words and to promote word interest
- Create a word journal of unfamiliar words

Teacher:

- Circulate during SSR and provide “just in time” support
- Identify words from student logs and follow-up with extended instruction to whole group for high priority words

Teacher's Active Role to Scaffold SSR

- Working with a group of struggling readers to pre-select common text,
- Previewing the text and pre-teaching key words, and
- Providing opportunities after reading to respond orally and through writing to the reading.

Goal = increase teacher and student interactions

Step 3: Preview the text and set a purpose for reading:
What will I learn? What do I want to find out about?
What will happen next in the story?

Previewing text can help orient students to the task of reading including setting a purpose for reading and provides the teacher with time to provide background knowledge.

Preview:

- Title
- Chapter titles or major headings
- Visuals

Step 4: Monitor SSR and schedule short increments.

- Monitor students' progress during independent reading:
 - observe students and ensure they are reading
 - assist students when they come to unknown words or experience a breakdown of understanding
 - implement paired reading (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2005)
- Allot small amounts of time and increase time as students' ability, attention, and motivation increases

Step 5: Wrap-up the reading and stimulate future reading.

Teacher can support struggling readers by providing time to summarize the reading that was done.

- Students return to their initial purpose for reading
 - Did I figure out what I wanted?*
 - Did I accurately predict what happened?*

CHAPTER BOOK ORGANIZER

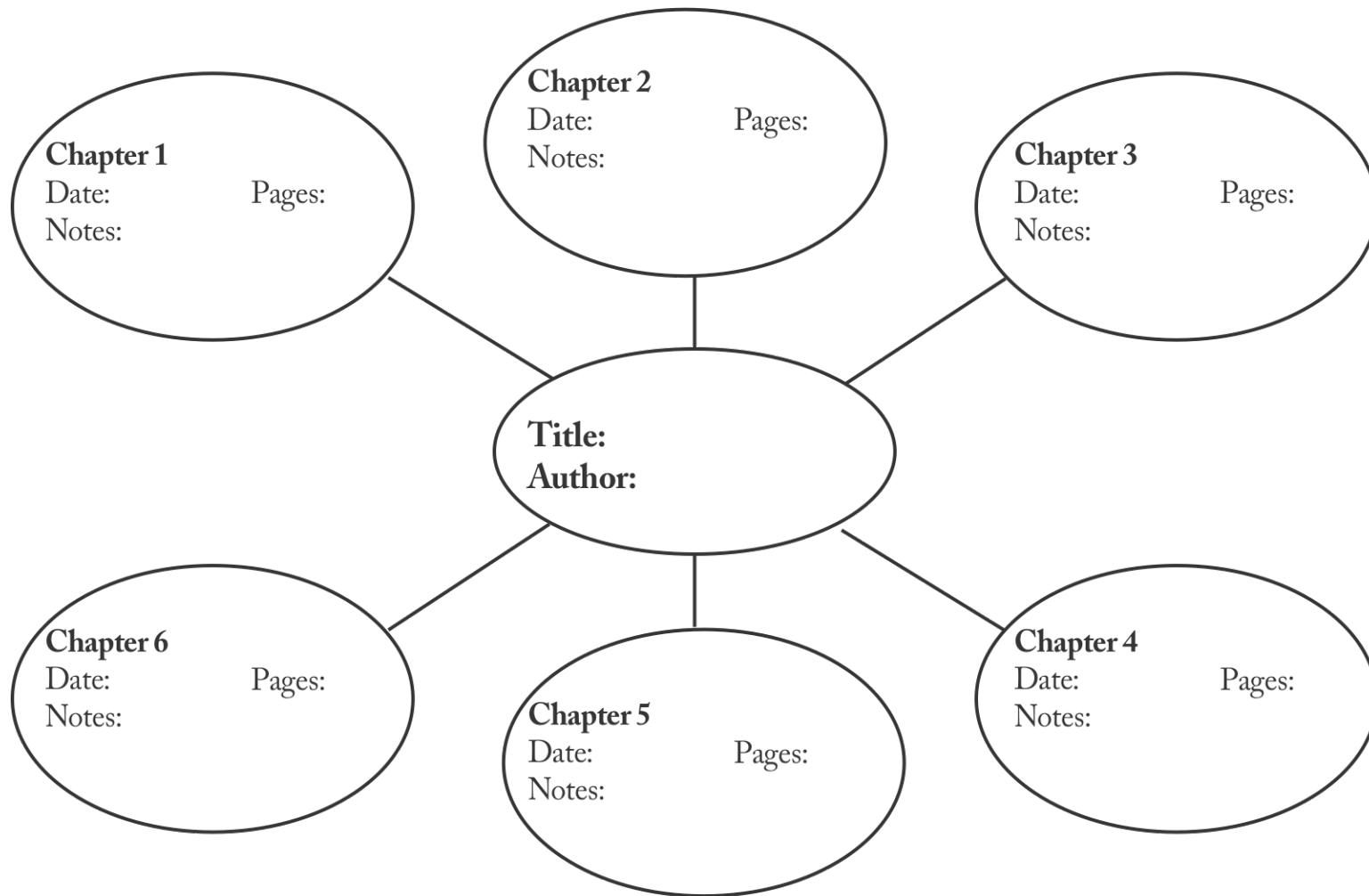


Figure 2. Sample chapter book organizer.

Book title:

Date:

Pages read:

Fantastic Events	
Fabulous Finds	
Fascinating Vocabulary	

Figure 3. Sample vocabulary map

5. Directions for Future Research

- Conduct experimental studies on SSR targeting struggling readers

Research questions to be addressed:

1. What is the optimal amount of time for SSR with struggling readers? Does this optimal time depend on age, reading level, or a combination of both?
2. How does SSR benefit wide reading and vocabulary, background knowledge, motivation, fluency, and reading comprehension for the range of struggling readers?
3. How might selected modification to SSR impact students' vocabulary, background knowledge, motivation, fluency, and reading comprehension?

6. Concluding Thoughts

- SSR presents unique challenges to students struggling with reading
- Suggested scaffolding SSR for struggling readers requires:
 - adequate preparation
 - optimal amount of text reading
 - choosing appropriate text types
 - instructional support before, during, and after reading
 - extended time for oral and written expression with teacher feedback about students' reading

7. References

Hairrell, A., Edmonds, M., Vaughn, S., & Simmons, D. (in press). *Independent silent reading for struggling readers: Pitfalls & Potential*.

Swanson, E. A., Wexler, J., & Vaughn, S. (2009). Text reading and students with learning disabilities. In E. H. Hiebert (Ed.), *Reading more, reading better* (pp. 210-230). Guilford Press, NY.

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